

## **Multilingualism and ethnic stereotypes: The Tariana of northwest Amazonia**

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### ABSTRACT

Tariana is spoken by about 100 people in the multilingual area of the Vaupés basin in northwest Amazonia (Brazil). Other languages spoken in the area are members of the East Tucanoan subgroup, with its most numerous representative, the Tucano language, rapidly gaining ground as a lingua franca. Also spoken are Makú languages; Baniwa, an Arawak language spoken on the fringes of the area and closely related to Tariana; and Portuguese, the national language. The area is known for its language group exogamy and institutionalized multilingualism, with its language being the badge of identity for each group. Language choice is motivated by power relationship and by status, and there are strict rules for code-switching. Inserting bits of other languages while speaking Tariana (“code-mixing”) has different consequences that mirror existing ethnic stereotypes. Code-mixing with Tucano is considered a “language violation”; using elements of Baniwa is considered funny, while mixing different Tariana dialects implies that one “cannot speak Tariana properly.” Overusing Portuguese is associated with the negative image of an Indian who tries to be better than his peers. (Brazil, Amazonia, Tariana, language ideology, code-mixing, ethnic stereotypes.)

### INTRODUCTION

The choice of the language of interaction in a multilingual society can be an important site for the reproduction of ethnic stereotypes associated with each language. The Tariana-speaking minority in the multilingual area of the Vaupés basin in northwest Amazonia (Brazil) offers a spectacular illustration of how this can be achieved.

This article starts with a brief overview of the Vaupés area. Then I discuss the principles of choosing a language and look at the use of different languages in varied circumstances – that is, CODE-SWITCHING and CODE-MIXING. The findings are summarized in the final section.

## BACKGROUND: THE VAUPÉS AREA

The multilingual area of the Vaupés basin, which spans the border of Colombia and Brazil in northwest central Amazonia, has long fascinated linguists and anthropologists; it was first described by Sorensen 1967, and then by Jackson 1974, 1976, and 1983 (see also Sorensen 1985, Grimes 1985). This area is known for its language-group exogamy and institutionalized multilingualism. One is required to marry a person belonging to a different language group: Marrying someone who belongs to the same language group is considered akin to incest and is referred to as “what dogs do” (an expression frequently used in all the indigenous languages of the Vaupés). An Indian’s “main” language is the language of his or her patrilineage and is a badge of individual identity (Jackson 1983:165). As a result, in spite of the traditional multilingualism enhanced by language-based exogamy, every Indian identifies with just one language – that of the father. In this language, an Indian would consider himself – and be considered – as both the “owner” and an authority, no matter how fluent he might be in other languages of the region.

Languages traditionally spoken in the Brazilian Vaupés belong to three genetically unrelated families: East Tucanoan, Arawak, and Makú. (Previous studies are concerned with the Colombian part of this linguistic area, where the multilingual marriage network is limited to East Tucanoan people. The location of the groups discussed here is shown on the map in Figure 1.) On the Brazilian side, only East Tucanoan and Arawak people enter into the marriage network. The Makú people, putative autochthonous inhabitants of the area, are considered inferior (see Aikhenvald 1999a,b, Jackson 1974, Martins & Martins 1999). They differ from the dominant East Tucanoan and Arawak peoples in many ways, from their appearance to most aspects of their economy and lifestyle. The Makú are nomadic hunters and gatherers, while the others are slash-and-burn agriculturalists; the Makú do not live along the banks of large rivers, while the others do; and the Makú intermarry regardless of language affiliation and tend to be monolingual, while the others do not.<sup>1</sup> In many areas of the world, agriculturalists consider autochthonous hunters and gatherers, who live in the dangerous jungle rather than along rivers, and may be darker-skinned and smaller in stature, to be an “inferior” type of people. This is exactly how the Makú peoples are regarded by the East Tucanoans and the Tariana of the Vaupés.<sup>2</sup>

The East Tucanoan languages spoken in the area are Tucano, Piratapuya, Wanano and Desano; there are also a few speakers of Tuyuca, Tatuyo, and Siriano, and of Cubeo (the only language of the Central Tucanoan subgroup). These languages are closely related, “a little further apart” than Romance languages (Sorensen 1967).<sup>3</sup> The most numerous groups in the Brazilian Vaupés traditionally were the Tucano, the Wanano/Piratapuya, and the Desano. Nowadays Tucano, traditionally the majority language, is gradually gaining ground as the lingua franca of the area. Table 1, based on Grimes 1988, gives an idea of the numbers

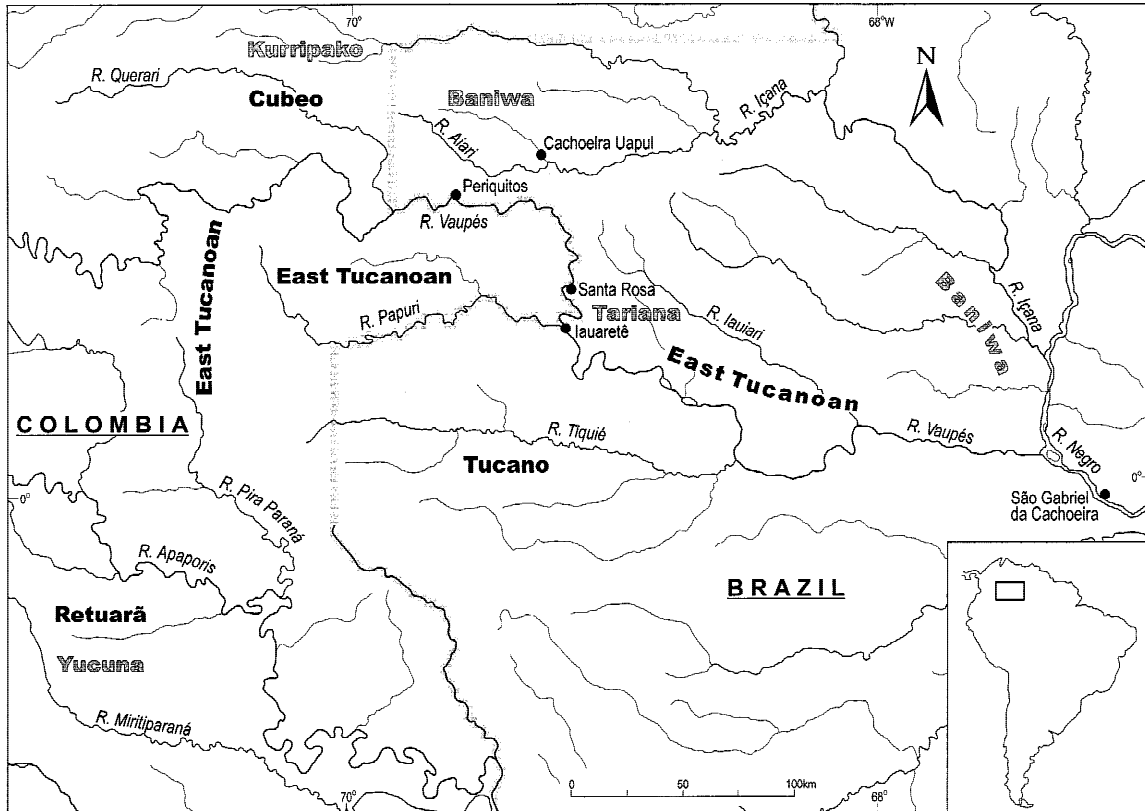


FIGURE 1: Languages spoken in the Vaupés area and its surrounding region.

TABLE I. *Languages and their speakers in the Brazilian Vaupés region.*<sup>4</sup>

	Tucano	Piratapuya	Wanano	Desano	Cubeo	Tuyuca	Tariana
Population	4,500	1,232	1,000	1,800	3,000	723	1500
Speakers	4,500	200	200	150	300	700	c. 100

of those who identify themselves as belonging to East Tucanoan groups and to Tariana, and those who actually speak the languages.

Tariana, the main Arawak language in the multilingual Brazilian Vaupés, was once a dialect continuum spoken by more than 1,500 people in various settlements along the Vaupés River and its tributaries. The Tariana clans used to form a strict hierarchy according to their order of appearance as stated in their creation myth (see Brüzzi 1977:102–3; Aikhenvald 1999b:26, and Text 1 therein). Lower-ranking groups in this hierarchy (referred to as “younger siblings” by their higher-ranking tribespeople) would perform various ritual duties for their “elder siblings” – for instance, lighting their cigars during the Offering ritual (cf. the description in Brüzzi 1977). Each group would speak a different variety of the language. The difference between these varieties is comparable to that between individual East Tucanoan languages (data on dialects can be retrieved from Koch-Grünberg 1911, Wheeler n.d., and Giacone 1962; a full analysis will appear in Aikhenvald forthcoming, b). As the Catholic missions and European influence expanded, the groups highest in the hierarchy abandoned the Tariana language, adopting the Tucano language instead. As a result, Tariana is actively spoken now by only about 100 people.<sup>5</sup> These belong to two subtribes of the lowest-ranking group, Wamiarikune, and live in two villages, Santa Rosa and Periquitos. Santa Rosa is situated about five hours by motorboat up the Vaupés River from the nearest mission, Iauaretê, where the majority of high-ranking Tucano-speaking Tariana live, and where some of the Santa Rosa Tariana have moved recently. In Santa Rosa, only adults speak Tariana (the youngest speaker is twenty-seven). In Periquitos, Tariana is spoken by some children.

Other North Arawak languages spoken on tributaries of the Upper Rio Negro on the outskirts of the Vaupés area are Baniwa of the Içana-Kurripako dialect continuum, with its large dialect groups Siuci and Hohôdene (3,000–4,000 speakers, and a varying degree of language endangerment), closely related to Tariana (see Aikhenvald 1999a).<sup>6</sup>

Lingue franche currently spoken in the region are Tucano and, traditionally, Língua Geral (or Nheengatu), now understood only by older people.<sup>7</sup> Portuguese in Brazil and Spanish, in Colombia are also employed as lingue franche under certain circumstances (see below).

The main consequence of the recent spread of the Tucano language in the Brazilian Vaupés is the gradual undermining of the one-to-one identification be-

tween language and indigenous group: Indians whose fathers' language was Tariana speak only Tucano, with which they have no patrilineal "right" to identify. Many of these Tucano-speaking Indians do not have Tucano mothers, so their connections with the Tucano language are dubious, according to the traditions of the area. The Tucano and Tucano-speaking "upper class" Tariana are numerically the largest group, and politically the most important; this threatens what we conceive of as erstwhile "egalitarian" multilingualism and language diversity (in the sense of Haudricourt 1961, and Hill & Hill 1980:321). In the Brazilian Vaupés, most languages other than Tucano have become endangered. The discrepancy between the number of people who belong to a tribe and those who actually speak the language is particularly marked in the case of Tariana. Those who "lost" their father's language are referred to as "those who speak a borrowed language" and therefore have nothing to identify with (Tariana *na-sawayã na-sape*, lit. 'they borrow they speak'). They are treated with a mixture of pity and contempt – and envy, since quite a few of them have managed to achieve coveted economic status. For those who still speak Tariana, this language has particular value as a mark of "linguistic solidarity," as is characteristic of linguistic minorities all over the world (cf. Woolard 1989).

#### HOW TO CHOOSE A LANGUAGE

According to the language "etiquette" of the area, one is supposed to speak the language one identifies with – that is, one's father's language – to one's siblings, one's father, and all his relatives, and one's mother's language to one's mother and her relatives. Most speakers of Santa Rosa Tariana follow this pattern: They speak Tariana to their father and his classificatory brothers, and East Tucanoan languages (Piratapuya, Tucano, and Wanano, in that order) to their mother and her generation. However, people twenty to forty years old tend to speak Tucano among themselves and to their children, saying that "this is easier" and that "otherwise women won't understand." As a consequence, their children can at most understand Tariana, and none of them can speak it. In contrast, most Periquitos Tariana speak Tariana to the representatives of their father's generation and among themselves. When addressing their children, they use Tariana, Tucano, and Wanano; when they speak to their wives, they prefer their wives' languages (Tucano or Wanano). As a result, all the children have some competence in Tariana, but only some are fluent.

According to traditional etiquette, it is polite to speak the language of one's guest, or of the majority of the people around, in order not to exclude them (and lest they think something is being intentionally concealed from them<sup>8</sup>). When a Piratapuya family came to the Tariana-speaking household of Candi, one of the oldest speakers and a most loyal keeper of tradition, he conversed with them in Piratapuya until the arrival of his wife, Maria, a Piratapuya. When another Piratapuya (also married to a Tariana) dropped by, she immediately joined in, in the

same language. However, when Goro – a Piratapuya woman who is known to have lost her language and speaks just Tucano and regional Portuguese – came in, the whole group switched to Tucano.

Making a point of speaking one's own language, no matter what, is a way of showing who is "in charge." Marino, one of the most traditional speakers of Periquitos Tariana, was vociferously criticized – behind his back – for speaking Tariana to his Santa Rosa relatives in front of those Tariana who had lost their language: This behavior was perceived as a linguistically aggressive way of asserting himself and his superiority. (Numerous representatives of the Santa Rosa Tariana expressed their resentment to me and to each other, and especially to their elder, Candi, saying Marino wanted to be better than others, without sufficient reason.) Since Tucano is the majority language, most Tucano speakers – especially males – always insist on speaking Tucano with no regard to the linguistic affiliation or competence of their interlocutors. When a speaker of Tucano comes in, everyone immediately switches to Tucano (similar reports can be found in Hugh-Jones 1979 and Jackson 1983).

Hardly any non-Indians speak indigenous languages. When there is a white person around, the interaction is in Portuguese, for those who feel confident with it. Those who do not remain silent. Some still use Tucano as an "unmarked" lingua franca of the area. Once I visited a Piratapuya-speaking household, accompanied by the Santa Rosa Tariana family I stayed with. A younger person addressed me in Portuguese, but the old lady of the house muttered a greeting in Tucano. Indians who consider themselves "in charge" of the situation make it a point of using their own language. During my stay in the Tariana village of Santa Rosa, one of the few shamans on the Vaupés, a Wanano himself, paid us a brief visit. He spoke to me in Wanano to show his status, and then switched to Tucano to make himself understood by "women who only speak Tucano" (he was said to speak no Portuguese).

Most schooling is in Portuguese, although a little Tucano is taught at a secondary school in the mission center. Switching to Portuguese, the "white man's language," is obligatory in all the environments associated with white people: schools, church services, sports and games, hospital, and commercial activities (see Silva 1999 on the expansion of Western-style football in the Vaupés environment and the competitive spirit that goes with it; cf. Schmidt 1987:203 on the high frequency of Standard Fijian forms in a special speech style used during netball games in a Fijian village, since this sport was acquired through the school system). All written communication between literate Indians is in Portuguese.<sup>9</sup>

The choice of language in everyday communication is thus determined by two factors: first by traditional language etiquette and politeness, and second by an association between language and status. Tucano, rather than Portuguese, is nowadays used as a language of power (unlike Spanish in the Nahuatl context; see Hill & Hill 1980),<sup>10</sup> and the use of Portuguese is obligatory in only certain contexts.

## CODE-SWITCHING AND CODE-MIXING

The main way of maintaining multilingualism in the Vaupés is a strong inhibition against language mixing, viewed mostly in terms of foreign morphemes and insertion of words from a different language into one's speech (code-mixing). Those who violate the principle of keeping languages strictly apart and commit the "crime" of mixing their languages by introducing lexical and grammatical loans (Tariana *na-ñamura na-sape* 'they mix they speak') are ridiculed as incompetent and sloppy. This is only partly in agreement with Silverstein's (1979) idea of cognitive "limits of awareness," whereby "relatively presupposing" (more referential and "continuously segmentable") linguistic items are more likely to be the object of close scrutiny and conscious monitoring than, for instance, syntactic patterns or prosodic phenomena; see Aikhenvald (forthcoming, a, 2002) for a discussion of lexical, phonological, and other mechanisms employed to control possible influx of loans into Tariana.

The long-term interaction between East Tucanoan languages and the Tariana dialect continuum has resulted in diffusion of patterns and calquing of categories, pointing toward strong areal convergence of patterns rather than of forms. This does not imply the emergence of an "identical" grammar (see Aikhenvald 1996, 1999a).

Code-switching and code-mixing operate somewhat differently, in agreement with a variety of ethnic stereotypes associated with representatives of existing language groups. The Tariana-East Tucanoan interaction – which could be characterized as resistance to Tucano dominance – is discussed below. Baniwa is very similar to Tariana, and there is no relation of dominance or threat between them. Baniwa speakers are viewed just as "those who are not quite like us." Those Tariana who cannot keep their dialects apart are treated as potentially dangerous aliens who "cannot speak properly." Portuguese ("the white man's language")<sup>11</sup> cannot be avoided in some circumstances, but those who overuse it are treated with contempt and said to "want to be better than us."

The Tariana and the East Tucanoan people of the Vaupés have no knowledge whatsoever of the Makú languages, despite the relatively high numbers of their speakers and constant interaction. They regard the Makú people with contempt, constantly comparing them with dogs and characterizing them as generally animal-like. Their languages are rejected as full of "unhuman" sounds and judged as "talk for nothing" (*medaperi-pu*) (see Jackson 1983:178 for a similar account). Here, the question of possible code-switching or code-mixing is not applicable.

*Resistance to dominance: Tariana and East Tucanoan languages*

The Tucano language and the East Tucanoan people are increasingly dominant over the Tariana in the Vaupés.<sup>12</sup> The image of a Tucano is that of an aggressive, imposing "invader" with an attitude of superiority. A person who consciously inserts Tucano lexical or grammatical morphemes into Tariana speech is viewed as a laughable "weakling" succumbing to pressure from the Tucano majority;

those who lost their Tariana language and speak just Tucano are pitied. When one unexpectedly switches languages or uses a Tucano or a Piratapuya word while speaking Tariana, this is likely to evoke roars of laughter.<sup>13</sup> Gara, one of the few Tariana successful in the white man's world (and respected for this), was mercilessly ridiculed for having used a Piratapuya word for 'armadillo' in a story in Tariana. (This mistake was discovered when we listened together, with Gara present, to a tape Gara had recorded the previous year. His brothers laughed at this in front of him, and for several years they kept making jokes about Gara as 'the one who said *miñe* [Piratapuya for 'armadillo'] instead of *salu* [Tariana].) Gara's immediate reaction was to claim that it was not he who had told that story – it must have been Eliseu Muniz from Periquitos, where they are "notorious for not being able to speak properly" (see below). Recently, Gara acquired an economically privileged status in the community, and now no one dares criticize or ridicule him to his face.

The speaker who produced ex. (1) – with two bound morphemes of Tucano origin (underlined) – was unanimously condemned as incompetent (behind his back, since he is feared for his "sorcery"). The morpheme *-ba* 'obvious' (Tucano *-baa*) is an enclitic and takes secondary stress, while the morpheme *-tuli* (Tucano *tuli* 'again') is unstressed and attaches to a Tariana dummy adjective stem accompanied by the adverbializer *-ina*, of Tariana origin.<sup>14</sup>

- (1) *heku-thena*                      *maka-tulina*      *nu-dia*      *nu-nu-ba*  
 yesterday-FR+REM.P.VIS      big-again+ADV      1sg-return      1sg-come-OBVIOUS  
 'I did obviously come again yesterday.'

A young speaker of the Periquitos variety of Tariana spontaneously produced (2), inserting a Tucano word (underlined) into his Tariana. When he uttered this sentence, everyone in the room choked with laughter. This mistake of his was long remembered as a shameful thing, constantly mentioned in conversations about this young man (otherwise respected as a good hunter) and in discussing what is and what is not correct Tariana (see Aikhenvald 2002, on language awareness among the Tariana and their evaluation of speakers' competence).

- (2) *Rafael matfa basa-mi*  
 Rafael good sing-PRES.VIS.3sgnf  
 'Rafael<sup>15</sup> sings well.'

Code-switching and even code-mixing are allowed in just two instances. One is direct speech quotations. When reporting what someone else has said, the preferred strategy is a direct speech complement, so that the speaker can avoid making the choice of an evidential for another person and run the risk of undesired implications concerning "validation" of the other person's evidence. Thus, instead of saying 'he is coming-reported', the speaker would prefer 'he said: I am coming-visual'. Ex. (3) is an example of a direct speech complement in Tariana used in a conversation in Tucano:



- (3) *ati'a* ["*pi-wana di-na*"]      *nii-a-mo*  
 come 2sg-call      3sgnf-OBJECT say-REC.P.VIS-3sgf  
 'Come (here), she said: "Call him."'

To insert a direct speech complement in Tucano while speaking Tariana is also acceptable, as shown in (4):

- (4) ["*ati'a-ato*"]      *du-a-tahka*      *pi-na*  
 come-IMPER.BY.PROXY 3sgf-say-FR+REC.P.VIS 2sg-OBJECT  
 'She did indeed say (in vain) to you: "Come (on your father's order)!"'

In stories, animals and evil spirits may speak a language different from that of the narrative; cf. Silver & Miller 1997 for special speech of animals in North American Indian literature. Along similar lines, de Reuse (1994:314–6) reports that animals talk Chukchee in a Siberian Eskimo tale, and that "magic words" in St. Lawrence Island (Alaska) Yupik are usually in a different language – Chukchee or Koryak. In a Jirrbal (Australia) traditional legend, a lizard speaks in Girramay (a closely related dialect) "as if to emphasize his villainous nature" (Dixon 1984:32). In (5), an evil spirit shouts *bolaaro!* in Tucano:

- (5) *du-yarupe-pidana*      *du-a*      *bolaaro!*  
 3sgf-language-REM.P.REP 3sgf-say *bolaaro!*  
 'In her language she (the spirit) said "Bolaaro!"'

However, when the same item, *bolaro* 'evil spirit', was used instead of Tariana *ñamu* by the same speaker, Kiri, in (6), in a non-quotation context, this provoked an outburst of laughter, and everyone kept commenting on her lack of proficiency in storytelling because of this "language mixing." These comments were also made when we listened to the tape; I heard the same comments made by the speakers (Juvi and Yuse, and Maye and Juvi, separately) to one another when they were scarcely aware of my presence. (I was pretending to be trying out my meagre Tucano by chatting to the women in the 'women's' half of the house we were in). For quite some time, Kiri was referred to as 'she who said *bolaro*'. In the same story, Kiri used a few Baniwa items (boldface in ex. 6), and these were not laughed at and were commented on later (see below):

- (6) *paite*      ***bolaro***      *li-nu-pida*  
 one+NCL:ANIM evil.spirit 3sgnf-come-REPORTED  
 'An evil spirit came.'

Animals and evil spirits are even allowed to use words from different languages in a single sentence. In a story told by José Manoel Brito, one of the oldest speakers, the otter says (7) to his child, using Tariana and Tucano (underlined):

- (7) *matfa-naka*      *mahki*  
 good-PRES.VIS son:VOCATIVE  
 'It is good, my son.'

However, everyone looked very surprised when José Manoel came to see us one morning and said (8) to me, using the Tucano term for 'daughter'. No one laughed

in his face – he is a respected elder, and a widower so everyone feels sorry for him. But after he had left, Juvi said to me, “He wanted to say *nuitō* (Tariana, ‘my daughter’), he just stammered.”<sup>16</sup>

- (8) *kawhi-tha*                                      *phia mahkō*  
 be.awake-INTER.PRES.NONVIS    you    daughter:VOCATIVE  
 ‘Are you awake, my daughter?’ (Tariana greeting equivalent to ‘Good morning’)

When Américo Brito, the oldest living speaker of Tariana, greeted me with (9), the general consensus – pronounced after he had left – was that he is ‘not all there any more’:

- (9) *pi-nu-nihka*                                      *mahkō*  
 2sg-come-INTER.REC.P.VIS    daughter:VOCATIVE  
 ‘Have you come, daughter?’

Both speakers consistently used the Tucano address terms to their Tariana classificatory sons and daughters, no matter whether they were speaking Tariana or Tucano. Addressing the foreign researcher in the same way as one addresses one’s own children may imply a higher degree of acceptance than if one had to make a constant effort to speak to this researcher in the appropriate way.

If the narrator explicitly states that a character is of Tucano origin, that narrator is “allowed” to speak Tucano, as in (10). The narrator did not want to be ridiculed for inappropriate use of another language, and he stated twice that the character was Tucano and spoke a different language:

- (10) *diha du-sa-niri*                                      *di-ya-pidana*  
 ART    3sgf-spouse-MASC    3sgnf-cry-REM.P.REP  
*yasene-seri-pidana*                                      *yí’i nímó*  
 Tucano-SINGL-REM.P.REP    I    spouse  
*dero weégisari*                                      *di-a-pidana*                                      *di-ya*  
 how    do+FUT.UNCERT    3sgnf-say-REM.P.REP    3sgnf-cry  
*yaseniku-ne-pidana*                                      *di-ya-ka*  
 Tucano.language-INST-REM.P.REP    3sgnf-cry-DECL  
 ‘Her husband cried, he was Tucano, “My wife, what am I going to do,” here he cried in Tucano.’

In summary, unlawful code-mixing with Tucano and other East Tucanoan languages is simply disallowed and considered as violation of a norm. The insertion of Tucano elements – as a way of imitating a “bad” speaker, or as a way of transmitting a negative stereotype of an imposing, willful invader – is not appropriate; to describe such an individual one just says “they mix languages.” There is no such thing as “mock Tucano.”

*‘They are not quite like us’: Tariana and Baniwa*

Tariana and Baniwa share over 80% of their lexicon, but their grammars are markedly different. The Tariana are aware of this affinity, and the two groups

are basically friendly. In political alliances, the Tariana prefer to team up with the Baniwa rather than with the Tucano. The image of a Baniwa speaker is that of someone friendly who speaks somewhat similarly to Tariana, but not quite right. Those whose Tariana bears Baniwa influence are treated like children in our culture: as if they are trying to speak correctly but are not quite succeeding. In (6), Kiri used three Baniwa morphemes: numeral classifier *-ite* instead of Tariana *-ita*, 3rd person singular non-feminine prefix *li-* instead of Tariana *di-*, and the reported evidential (unmarked for tense) *-pida* instead of Tariana reported remote past evidential *-pidana*, which is appropriate for storytelling. Speakers of Tariana commented that Kiri speaks Tariana “not quite right,” but then excused her, saying that “this is the way she learned it” and “she cannot do anything about it” (she grew up in a half-Tariana-, half-Baniwa-speaking environment).

Baniwa speakers and those who occasionally insert Baniwa words into their Tariana are mocked behind their backs and referred to in terms of the most salient word in Baniwa discourse, the paragraph opener *ne:ni* ‘then’. Baniwa speakers and people like Kiri are jokingly referred to as *ne:ni*, *ne:ni*. This use of a discourse marker as an identifying token of Baniwa is no doubt connected to the saliency of discourse markers, which often facilitates their borrowing from one language to another (cf. discussion in Brody 1995).

When a speaker of Tariana wants to put on a slightly silly act, he or she may well say something like *pi-na nu-kaite* (2sg-OBJECT 1sg-tell:BANIWA) instead of *pi-na nu-kalite* (2sg-OBJECT 1sg-tell:TARIANA) ‘I’ll tell you (something)’. The remark in (11) was often used to refer to a Tariana fooling around. The word with Baniwa ‘insertions’ is pronounced in an unnatural way, with primary stress both on the prefix and on the Baniwa enclitic, to emphasize its “foreignness” and comic effect. In the equivalent Tariana word, *dí-nu-pità*, the enclitic – like all enclitics in this language – takes secondary stress.

- (11) *pi-ka ká-nu-petá*  
 2sg-look 3sgnf-come-AGAIN  
 ‘Look, here he comes again (trying to act like a clown).’

If somebody says something totally obvious, speakers often react with *ne:ni*, *ne:ni*, roughly equivalent to English ‘oh yeah, sure! come on!’.

These “mock Baniwa”<sup>17</sup> words convey the impression of being slightly funny and slightly inferior through the process of “indirect indexicality” (Ochs 1990): “someone almost like us but not quite.” While all the Tariana speakers are fully proficient in at least one East Tucanoan language, none of them is fully bilingual in Baniwa; however, the most inveterate users of “mock Baniwa” can carry on some conversation in Baniwa, mixing it up in a rather random way with Tariana (this mixture is reminiscent of Portunhol, a mixture of Spanish and Portuguese popular in frontier areas such as the Argentina-Brazil border).

*'They cannot speak properly': Mixing Tariana dialects*

Inserting forms from different dialects of Tariana or just speaking a different dialect is considered improper speech behavior. A possible explanation for this lies in the memory of old wars and enmities among the Tariana subgroups.

As mentioned above, only two, very closely related members of the once numerous Tariana dialects are still actively spoken: Tariana of Santa Rosa and Tariana of Periquitos. The two dialects are mutually intelligible – differences between them are comparable to those between American English and British English. Hardly any Tariana are proficient in both dialects, but they are aware of the differences. Jorge, a fluent speaker of the Periquitos dialect, has lived among the Santa Rosa and occasionally uses Santa Rosa forms. Whenever he slips into a Santa Rosa form, he is frowned upon by other Periquitos speakers as someone who “wants to be like that other lot.” When a younger speaker of the Santa Rosa dialect spontaneously used a word he had just heard from Periquitos speakers, he was mildly reprimanded: “You do not want to be like those who do not speak properly.”

The lexicon of other dialects appears to be still remembered by a few old people. The words they use are ridiculed by other Tariana speakers as being “invented” under false pretenses. The reason why these “rememberers” are ridiculed behind their backs could have to do with their higher status in the traditional tribal hierarchy (discussed by Brüzzi 1977:102–3), since the remaining speakers of Tariana, from both Santa Rosa and Periquitos, are representatives of the lowest group in that hierarchy. An old rememberer of the Kabana dialect, once hierarchically the most “upper-class” group of the Tariana, was the laughing stock of the whole village of Santa Rosa for having used the “wrong” greetings and “wrong” morphemes. He was said to refer to old people as *upi-peri* (before-CL:COLL) ‘the ones of earlier times’, and to young people as *wali-peri* (young-CL:COLL), instead of Santa Rosa *pedale-pe* (old.person-PL) and *waliki-pe* (youngster-PL), using a “wrong” plural marker. This “misuse” was the object of continuous ridicule, and *upi-peri*, *wali-peri* became his ingroup nickname. That is, those who “try to be like us” (to pretend they are Tariana) and may even be taken for “one of us,” but are not quite like us, are viewed as potentially dangerous.<sup>18</sup> This is different from the relationship with Baniwa: Baniwa are benevolent allies, sufficiently different not to be taken for “one of us,” and can just be mocked, while the “other” Tariana are reprehensible. At the same time, however, all Tariana are considered blood relatives. Thus, the relationship to speakers of other dialects is akin to “linguistic NIMBYism” (Silverstein 1999): Even though all the Tariana agree that preserving the Tariana language in all its varieties is a matter of extreme importance, they do their best to eliminate the use of “other” ways of speaking their language when these happen in proximity to them.

*'They want to be better than us': Tariana and Portuguese*

The relationship between Tariana and the “white man’s language” is complex. The white people, a dominant group, are identified with access to economic prosperity and education. Thus, the white man’s language is a symbol of status (see Woolard 1989:89 on the multifaceted notion of “status”) associated with desirable qualities that imply changing the quality of one’s life. Yet a long-term interaction with white people (stereotyped as the “patron-peon” relationship; see Meira 1993, Hemming 1987) has created a feeling of inferiority, dependence, and hate of white people among Indians. Consequently, it has resulted in their stereotyping white people (especially men) as greedy, arrogant, go-getters. These features are also assigned to those who “overuse” a white man’s language while speaking Tariana, and thus are perceived as trying to gain access to the economic advantages of the white man’s world. These people are condemned as “wanting to be better than us.”

Two additional circumstances contribute to the negative image of white people. First, the highly feared mythical snake people or fish people (*kuphe-ne*) are conceived of as white (cf. similar observations in Hugh-Jones 1988 for Barasano, an East Tucanoan group from the Colombian side of the Vaupés, and in Harner 1984:154–5 for Jivaro). Second, the white people’s ways go against one basic assumption of the Vaupés area, that of language-based exogamy. White people do not marry according to their partner’s language affiliation, and in this way they are no better than the Makú who marry each other “like dogs.” Vaupés Indians who breach the marriage rules are said to “want to be like white people.”

We have noted that Portuguese is compulsory in the white man’s environment. Outside this environment, there are a number of circumstances where the use of occasional words of Portuguese in Tariana speech is neither condemned nor ridiculed (cf. a similar phenomena in Tewa, described by Dozier 1956). If the Tariana language simply lacks a term for a particular object or action, a word from ‘white man’s language’ can be employed without provoking any adverse reaction; such words include *espada* ‘sword’, *rei* ‘king’, *sapato* ‘shoe’, *paleto* ‘coat’, and *pesa* ‘piece; spare part’. Among verbs for which there is no Tariana equivalent are ‘lose’ (a game) and ‘win’, illustrated in (12), from a conversation about a soccer game. Traditional games in the Vaupés area (see Brüzzi 1977) were not competitive; the introduction of competition in games is a recent phenomenon (see Silva 1999 for an insightful analysis). The root *gaña* is a loan from Portuguese *ganhar* (pronounced /gaña/ in the regional variety). Portuguese loans are underlined:

- (12) *kwana* *ganha-ka-nihka*  
 who win-TH-INTER.REC.P.VIS  
 ‘Who has won?’

If a Tariana equivalent exists but would be a complex construction, a Portuguese loan may be used, as in the case of *kobra-* ‘charge, make pay’ in (13),

borrowed from Portuguese *cobrar*. In “pure” Tariana, this would be translated as a causative serial verb construction or a periphrastic causative: *di-a di-kawīta*, lit. ‘he makes he pays’. Numbers, especially those larger than five, are borrowed from Portuguese, as is the case of *seiscento*, from Portuguese *seiscentos* (pronounced /seisentu/ in the regional variety) ‘six hundred’, in (13):

- (13) *seiscento-pu di-na-ka cobra-ka*  
 six.hundred-AUG 3sgnf-want-REC.P.VIS charge-TH  
 ‘He wanted to charge (us) as much as six hundred (reais, Brazilian currency).’

The attitude of Tariana speakers (as well as most other speakers of the Vaupés languages; cf. Ramirez 1997:333 for Tucano, and Miller 1999:46 for Desano) to numbers is markedly different from that of other communities – e.g., Nahuatl, where “numerals have been a focus of purism . . . throughout the post-Conquest history of the language” (Hill & Hill 1980:337). The traditional Tariana culture, with its lack of trade, involved little counting. One-word numbers are one to four, and five is the word for ‘hand’; numbers from six to twenty involve quite complex noun phrases consisting of several grammatical words and an obligatory numeral classifier, e.g., *peme-kapi pa:-na dyanata-na* (one+SIDE+INDF-HAND one-CL:VERT 3sgnf+follow-CL:VERT) ‘six; lit. the side of one hand and one which follows’. Larger numerals do not exist. But to count money, all numbers – even lower ones – are borrowed from Portuguese, as in (14):

- (14) *cinco real di-na-thama diha*  
 five real 3sgnf-want-FR+PRES.NONVIS he  
 ‘He wants five reais.’

Portuguese lexemes are used frequently in spontaneous conversations about “white people’s” matters, as in (15), from a conversation about building the Tariana Cultural Center and, in particular, getting money and spare parts for machinery (the Portuguese term for a spare part is *peça*):

- (15) *ne peça sede-ka wa-na*  
 NEG spare.part not.exist-REC.P.VIS 1pl-OBJECT  
 ‘We do not even have spare parts.’

Loans include two function words: the disjunction *o*, from Portuguese *ou*, and the negation *nem* ‘not even; neither . . . nor’. In traditional Tariana, to express a disjunctive meaning, nouns or noun phrases are simply juxtaposed. Younger people employ *o* ‘or’, e.g., *paīta o ñama-ita* (one+CL:ANIM or two-CL:ANIM) ‘one or two (fish)’. This and the use of *nem* are mildly reprimanded.

A way of allowing oneself to insert a chunk of Portuguese into a Tariana narrative is by saying *yalana yaku-nuku* (white.man INDF+speech-TOP.NON.A/S) ‘in white man’s speech’. In (16), Oli used the expression ‘in white man’s speech’ (in brackets) twice, to introduce two Portuguese expressions, *nenhum tostão* ‘not one penny’ and *sustenta(r)* ‘support’ (here *r* is in brackets because it is not pronounced in the regional variety). Both are hard to translate into idiomatic Tariana.

- (16) *duha* [*yalana yaku-nuku*] *nenhum tostão*  
 she white.man INDF+speech-TOP.NON.A/S no penny  
*ma:-kade-ka na-na nuha* [*yalana*  
 NEG+give-NEG-REC.P.VIS 3pl-OBJECT I white.man  
*yaku-nuku*] *ñama-ita sustenta-ka*  
 INDF+speech-TOP.NON.A/S two-CL:ANIM support-REC.P.VIS

‘She (their mother) does not give them, in white man’s language, a single penny, I, in white man’s language, have been supporting the two of them.’

The expression *yalana yaku-nuku* (white.man INDF+speech-TOP.NON.A/S) ‘in white man’s speech’ can also be used to talk about white man’s customs, without employing any Portuguese. In (17), Gara uses this expression to signal that he is going to talk about something connected with the white environment:

- (17) [*yalana yaku-nuku*] *na-bueta*  
 white.man INDF+speech-TOP.NON.A/S 3pl-learn  
*na-keña-ri-nuku matfa-mhade*  
 3pl-begin-CONV-TOP.NON.A/S good-FUT

‘In white man’s language, at the beginning of the school year, (the enrollment) will be fine.’

Like Tucano languages, Portuguese is used in direct speech; however, neither European-imported animals nor Christian saints speak Portuguese in stories.

Those who use Portuguese words to “show off” their knowledge, or use them when a Tariana equivalent is readily available, get ridiculed, albeit behind their back: They are nicknamed “white people” who “have no language at all.” One of the old speakers of Tariana, Bati, who spent most of his life working in Brazil and Colombia away from his native Santa Rosa, often greets his Tariana-speaking relatives with Portuguese *bom dia* ‘good morning’ instead of Tariana ‘Are you awake?’ as in (8), and he often inserts Portuguese *pois é* ‘that’s it’ (functionally similar to ‘this is how things are’) into his Tariana. His prestige in the Tariana-speaking community is relatively low; behind his back he is referred to as *pois é* (this is similar to referring to those who mix Tariana and Baniwa by the discourse marker *ne:ni* discussed above). Juví, a highly competent Tariana speaker, keeps trying to use regional Portuguese when speaking to his children and inserts quite a bit of Portuguese vocabulary into his Tariana; as a result, his relatives overtly mock him for trying to become “white.”

In Tariana stories, nice white people speak Tariana, and nasty ones employ Portuguese expressions – usually just connectives whose function is to convey a negative image of a greedy patron, as in (18):

- (18) *pois é nu-na di-a-na dineiru*  
 this.is.it 1sg-OBJECT 3sgnf-say-REM.P.VIS money  
*pi-na ma:-kasu*  
 2sg-OBJECT NEG+give-INT

‘This is it, he (the nasty patron) said, I won’t give you money.’

A few lines prior to this, the same patron was trying to be nice and promised a good payment, all in Tariana:

- (19) *diwesewya pi-na matfa nu-kawīta-mhade*  
 then 2sg-OBJECT good 1sg-pay-FUT  
 'Then I will pay you well.'

This indicates that “mock Portuguese” inserted into Tariana functions as a semi-otic index employed to reproduce a negative stereotype of a white person (man or woman) and of an Indian who wants to be like a hated white person and shows off his or her superiority. This is strikingly similar to the negative indirect indexical functions of “mock Spanish” in American English (see Hill 1995).

An example of “mock Portuguese,” from a story about a kind, naive eagle and an arrogant, over-active toad who wants to have everything to her advantage, corroborates this. After the characters were introduced, the storyteller started referring to the toad as *Dona Hipara* ‘Lady Toad’ (*dona* is the Portuguese word for ‘lady’). The word *hipara* is a blend of Tariana *hiparu* ‘toad’ and Portuguese feminine ending *-a*. A comic effect was achieved, and approved of: The speaker succeeded in transmitting the negative ethnic stereotype. This deliberate linguistic modification as a comic device is strikingly similar to the use of “mock Spanish” by Mixteco Indians (see Pike 1945:224), and to the ways in which Tojolab’al Maya-speaking women evaluate the use of Spanish and acculturation (Brody 1991).

Just one aspect of the use of Portuguese in Tariana appears to be the source of pity, not of contempt. Younger people use Portuguese kinship terms as terms of address to those of their own generation – *mana* ‘sister’ and *mano* ‘brother’ – when speaking Tariana and also when speaking Tucano. They also use *titio* ‘uncle’ and *titia* ‘aunt’ to address their uncles, aunts, and in-laws, presumably because of the limitations of their knowledge of the complexities of the traditional kinship system. These people are pitied, just like those who have to speak “borrowed language.”

*English: The ‘capitalist paradise’*

English is gradually making its way into northwest Amazonia through music on the radio, after the occasional appearance of American missionaries and of sought-for duty-free goods sold in Manaus, capital of the Brazilian state of Amazonas, and in São Gabriel da Cachoeira, capital of the municipality of the Upper Rio Negro, within the state of Amazonas, where the Vaupés region belongs administratively. Unlike Portuguese, it is assigned unreserved prestige. Its indexical value is associated with all the desirable qualities – an easy-going attitude to life, endless feasting, good products, anything a capitalist paradise could offer. Knowledge of English is a highly coveted asset.

CONCLUSIONS

Language ideologies are defined by Silverstein 1979 as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (cf. Woolard and Schieffelin 1994). Code-switching



in the Tariana-speaking community reflects these beliefs and the ethnic stereotypes that accompany them. It is allowed under restricted circumstances. Outside these, it bears overtones of an indirect index (in the sense of Ochs 1990), of undesirable qualities in people who do not stick to their language identity and try to become someone else. Using Tariana (especially "correct" Tariana) is the best mark of solidarity within the community. Unlawful use of Tucano and other East Tucanoan languages characterizes the speaker as sloppy and incompetent (or just senile). There is no "mock Tucano," probably because of the real danger it represents; overusing Tucano or any other East Tucanoan language is looked upon as a linguistic violation. Using Baniwa words while speaking Tariana characterizes one as a slightly foolish but basically friendly creature. "Mock Baniwa" has overtones of friendly teasing. In contrast, mixing elements of the few surviving Tariana dialects is almost as bad and as dangerous as using the Tucano languages in inappropriate circumstances. Inserting Portuguese into one's Tariana, beyond inevitable necessity, implies that one intends to break with being Indian and to acquire power in the greedy and negative (though coveted) white man's world. "Mock Portuguese" is a semiotic index used to condemn this ethnic stereotype.

In all these cases, manipulation of different languages serves the objective of perpetuating existing ethnic stereotypes in order to maintain the rapidly disappearing Tariana language, the symbol of solidarity of the last remaining group of its speakers. What probably was "egalitarian" multilingualism in the past is far from being egalitarian today.

## NOTES

\* The fieldwork on which this article is based was financed by a Wenner-Gren Foundation Small Grants project. I owe a considerable debt to all my teachers of the Tariana language: the Brito family of Santa Rosa and the Muniz family of Periquitos, and the Lopez family of Santa Terezinha. Special thanks go to R. M. W. Dixon, Jane Hill, and Ken Hill for insightful comments, and to Elias and Lenita Coelho de Assis for invaluable support in the fieldwork situation. I am grateful to Anya Woods for editorial assistance.

<sup>1</sup> Different clans among the Makú groups of Daw (Elias Coelho, p.c.) and Hupda (Renato Atias, p.c.) must have been traditionally exogamous. The rules of marriage between the Tucano people and the Tariana speakers involve a number of complexities, probably historically motivated. For instance, the Tariana cannot marry the speakers of the East Tucano language Desano. According to the origin myth, the Desano were once the Tarianas' younger brothers (this accords with a widespread hypothesis that the Desano used to speak an Arawak language). The Wanano do not marry the Piratapuya, and the Tucano do not marry the Barasano. One of the marriage principles is sister exchange. Every group appears to have preferential marriage partners: For instance, the Tariana of Santa Rosa tend to marry the Piratapuya, and the Tariana of Periquitos tend to marry the Wanano. There are, however, a few Tucano women, one Wanano and one Cubeo, among the wives of the Santa Rosa Tariana, and a couple of Tucano women in Periquitos.

<sup>2</sup> However, the idea that the Makú are the "indigenous" population of the area is founded on assumptions rather than on facts. The assumption is that nomadic hunters and gatherers are likely to be autochthonous to the area, and that the more sophisticated agriculturalists are likely to be newcomers (cf. Bétéille 1998 on frequent misconceptions associated with the notion of indigenous people; and discussion in Chapter 1 of Aikhenvald forthcoming, a).

<sup>3</sup> The Vaupés Indians are conscious of degrees of proximity between different Tucanoan languages. They acknowledge close relationships between Wanano and Piratapuya (which are in fact

close dialects with about 94% of the lexicon in common: see Barnes 1999 and Aikhenvald 1999a); they say that Tucano is “quite different” from these, while Cubeo is “very different” and “hard to learn.” Tariana, which belongs to a different family, is called “extremely difficult.” All the Tariana consider one another blood relatives, while representatives of all other nations are called “marriageable relatives” or “in-laws.”

<sup>4</sup> This table does not include numbers of speakers for languages not spoken in Brazil, such as the East Tucanoan languages Tatuyo, Makuna, or Sirianó (though occasional migrants from Colombia speaking these languages have been known to live in the Brazilian Vaupés, there are no Sirianó or Makuna villages there). Extinct Tucanoan languages, such as Arapaso, are not mentioned (the existing Arapaso villages are exclusively Tucano-speaking). I did not include any information on the Makú languages in this table, since the Makú are outside the East Tucanoan-Tariana marriage network. The bulk of the Baniwa-Kurripako live outside the Vaupés, a reason for not including them in this table.

<sup>5</sup> I have been working on Tariana since 1991, with over 90% of the speakers of Santa Rosa dialect, and with over 70% of those from Periquitos. There are marked differences in cultural and lexical knowledge, as well as in the amount of syntactic calques, between representatives of different generations. However, none of my consultants can be considered a semi-speaker in the sense of Dorian (1981:107) or Schmidt 1985. As noted by Sorensen back in 1967, the Vaupés Indians place a high value on language fluency and would much rather underestimate than overestimate their knowledge. They are also afraid of making mistakes in a language in which they are not fully proficient and incurring ridicule. For this reason, semi-speakers hardly ever venture to open their mouths (those who do understand Tariana answer in Tucano or in Portuguese). My consultants are referred to here by their nicknames.

<sup>6</sup> Other Arawak languages in the area include Warekena, a dialect of Baniwa of Guainia (mainly spoken in Venezuela), spoken by a few dozen old people on the Xié River (see Aikhenvald 1998: 226–8); Old Warekena (also called Warena or Guarekena), spoken by a few old people on the Xié River and by a few hundred people in Venezuela, where they moved early this century (Aikhenvald 1998); and Bare, once the most important language along the Upper Rio Negro, but now probably extinct (see Aikhenvald 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Língua Geral is a creolized version of Tupinambá (Tupí-Guaraní family), spread from the east coast of Brazil by white merchants and missionaries. It was the lingua franca of the whole Amazon region from the late 17th century up to the mid-19th century; its influence can still be seen in a few loan words in Tariana and other languages of the Vaupés (see Aikhenvald 1996). Yanomami languages are spoken on the fringes of the area; the Vaupés people are aware of these people’s presence and are scared of them, but there is no active interaction (see Aikhenvald 1999b).

<sup>8</sup> For instance, the author was reprimanded for speaking French – which the Tariana could not understand – to a French anthropologist who happened to be in the area. I tried to object, saying that this was her father’s language; the immediate reaction was “Is there anything you want to hide from us?”

<sup>9</sup> The vast majority of the population of the Brazilian Vaupés are practicing Catholics (see Aikhenvald forthcoming, a, on the impact of Salesian missionaries in the region). Most people in their fifties, forties, thirties, and twenties are at least functionally literate in Portuguese, thanks to the obligatory schooling imposed by the Salesians. Recently, literacy in Tucano has been introduced; it is characterized by the vast majority as “too complicated” and is hardly ever used, except in some church materials distributed by the mission center and in the notices and prayers on the mission walls, produced by Salesians.

<sup>10</sup> One should be aware of the differences in the position of Portuguese in the Vaupés and of Spanish in the Nahuatl context: Spanish and Nahuatl are in a binary context in Mexico, while Portuguese functions more as a language outside the community. Ken Hill (p.c.) suggests that in the Vaupés, Tucano occupies a position comparable to that of Spanish in the Nahuatl-speaking environment.

<sup>11</sup> The term “white man’s language” or “white man’s thing” is a literary translation of the Tariana term *yalana yarupe* ‘white.man thing’, consistently used to refer to the dominant Portuguese (Brazil); it is also used to refer to other languages spoken by white people, e.g., French (but not English, which is called *ingles yarupe* ‘English thing’, *americano yarupe*, or *gringu yarupe*; the words *inglês*, *americano*, and *gringo* are of Portuguese origin. Spanish is referred to as *colombianu yarupe* ‘Colombian’s thing’. Most of my consultants have had some experience of working in Colombia and Venezuela and speak at least some Spanish, but they hardly ever use it in the Brazilian context.

<sup>12</sup> This mostly holds for speakers of the Tucano language but is also true of speakers of all other East Tucano languages mentioned in Table 1 (with the possible exception of the Tuyuca).

<sup>13</sup> Perception of inappropriate language behavior is usually signaled by laughter – in front of the speaker, unless he or she is feared or is a respected elder – and remembered as hilarious. The functions of laughter as a reaction to inappropriate linguistic behavior, and who is “allowed” to laugh at whom in what environment, is an issue that requires further investigation. My data here and elsewhere were acquired with participant-observation techniques; numerous observations on linguistic and other types of behavior of the speakers were made when they were unaware of my presence (for instance, when I was in a different part of the house, or in a different corner of the same house, apparently absorbed in what I was pretending to be doing).

<sup>14</sup> Abbreviations are as follows: 1, 2, 3 first, second, third person; ADV adverb; ANIM animate; ART article; AUG augmentative; CL classifier; COLL collective; CONV converb; DECL declarative; F feminine; FR frustrative; FUT future; FUT.UNCERT uncertain future; IMPER.BY.PROXY imperative by proxy; INDF indefinite person; INST instrumental; INT intentional; INTER.PRES.NONVIS interrogative present nonvisual; INTER.REC.P.VIS interrogative recent past visual; MASC masculine; NCL:ANIM numeral classifier for animate nouns; NEG negative; NF nonfeminine; pl, PL plural; PRES.NONVIS present nonvisual; PRES.VIS present visual; REC.P.VIS recent past visual; REM.P.REP remote past reported; REM.P.VIS remote past visual; SG singular; SINGL singulative; TH thematic; TOP.NON.A/S topical nonsubject.

<sup>15</sup> Here and throughout, Portuguese words and personal names are given in the standard orthography.

<sup>16</sup> What he said in Tariana was *pi-na nuitō di-na-tha-mha di-wana, habali di-a-ka medā* (2sg-OBJECT 1sg + daughter:VOCATIVE 3sgnf-want-FRUSTRATIVE-PRESENT.NONVISUAL 3sgnf-call, stammer 3sgnf-go-RECENT.PAST.VISUAL obviously) ‘he wanted (in vain) to call you *nuitō*, he obviously stammered’.

<sup>17</sup> The terms “mock Baniwa” and “mock Portuguese” were coined on the basis of Jane Hill’s (1995) discussion of Mock Spanish in the USA; the term “Mock Spanish” goes back to Pike 1945.

<sup>18</sup> This is reminiscent of the perception of “other” as being potentially dangerous. See discussion of the negative overtones of being “other” and being “different” in Aikhenvald forthcoming, a.

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(Received 19 January 2001, Final version received 1 March, 2002)

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